

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 183

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 11, 1997

By Assemblymen DeCROCE and BODINE

- 1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** establishing "Safe Driver Awareness Weeks."
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- 3 **WHEREAS**, Driver fatigue contributes significantly to traffic accidents that result
4 in death and serious injury to New Jersey motorists and pedestrians; and
- 5 **WHEREAS**, The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration
6 reports that driver fatigue is responsible for over 100,000 crashes
7 nationally per year which kill 1,500 people and injure 71,000 people and
8 is the cause of at least 138 motor vehicle fatalities annually in New Jersey;
9 and
- 10 **WHEREAS**, Drivers must perform a series of coordinated tasks using their
11 hands, feet, eyes, ears and body movements to drive safely and defensively
12 and effective performance of such tasks may be affected by fatigue; and
- 13 **WHEREAS**, Driver fatigue and impairment is often caused by excessive driving
14 and the forgoing of necessary sleep in order to meet unreasonable
15 deadlines and schedules; and
- 16 **WHEREAS**, Driver fatigue and impairment may often be caused or worsened
17 by the use of substances other than alcohol, which may include herbal
18 remedies, "designer drugs" and sedating medications, both prescription and
19 over-the-counter; and
- 20 **WHEREAS**, Citizens Against Drug Impaired Drivers reports that of the
21 approximately 43,000 annual motor vehicle fatalities in the United States,
22 10,000 to 15,000 fatalities involve the use of substances other than alcohol;
23 and
- 24 **WHEREAS**, The law enforcement community of New Jersey is united in its
25 opposition to drivers' use of any substance to the extent that it might impair
26 driving performance; and
- 27 **WHEREAS**, The New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety has been
28 vigilant in its efforts to keep the motoring public informed of the dangers of
29 driving impaired as a result of excessive fatigue or the use of sedating
30 substances, and should be commended for its efforts; and

1 **WHEREAS**, The division is actively involved in training and certifying law
2 enforcement officers designated as drug recognition experts, who will
3 evaluate drivers suspected of impaired driving due to the use of substances
4 and remove such drivers from the roads; and

5 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey law presently provides specific penalties for persons
6 who drive under the influence of alcohol and narcotic, hallucinogenic or
7 habit-producing drugs, but does not, unlike many other states, provide
8 specific penalties for those who drive impaired or fatigued due to the
9 improper use of other substances or provide for the removal of these
10 persons from the road; and

11 **WHEREAS**, It is fitting and proper, in the interest of public safety, to
12 periodically call to the special attention of the drivers of New Jersey the
13 dangers of driving while fatigued, sedated or otherwise impaired and the
14 potential for various substances, which, when consumed prior to driving a
15 motor vehicle, to impair the driver's ability to safely maneuver that vehicle;
16 now, therefore,

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18 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

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20 The weeks immediately preceding the driving holidays of Memorial Day,
21 Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Day are
22 hereby declared "Safe Driver Awareness Weeks" in the State of New Jersey.
23 The General Assembly urges that all necessary actions be taken by the
24 appropriate State agencies to publicize these special weeks and, within the
25 limitations of their existing resources, to inform and educate the public
26 throughout the year on the dangers of driving while fatigued or under the
27 influence of any substance.

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STATEMENT

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31 The General Assembly, through this Assembly Resolution, declares that the
32 weeks immediately preceding the "driving" holidays of Memorial Day,
33 Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and New Year's Day be
34 designated as "Safe Driver Awareness Weeks in New Jersey."

35 The reason for establishing these special weeks, as stated in the resolution,
36 is to heighten public awareness of the dangers posed by driver fatigue and by
37 impaired driver response brought about by the use of substances. While the
38 perils of driving under the influence of alcohol are well publicized, the
39 resolution notes that an alarming number of crashes, injuries and fatalities are
40 attributable to fatigue and impairment caused by the use of other substances.
41 The resolution further observes that safe driving demands total alertness and
42 driver attention to the road.

43 The resolution recognizes and commends the efforts of the Division of

1 Highway Traffic Safety in the Department of Law and Public Safety to
2 increase public awareness of the danger of impaired driving and to encourage
3 the training of law enforcement officers as drug recognition experts.

4 The resolution urges all appropriate State agencies to publicize "Safe Driver
5 Awareness Week" and, within the limitations of existing resources, to take all
6 actions necessary throughout the year to inform and educate the public on the
7 dangers of driving while fatigued or while impaired by any substance.

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12 Establishes "Safe Driver Awareness Weeks."